

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

of the great personal danger that she and her followers must have run from the blind hatred of the populace, she had remained in the city all through these tumultuous days of revolution and anarchy, until the news came that the treaty was actually signed. Then she gathered her followers round her, and announced her intention of returning instantly to Siena, now that she had fulfilled the command of Christ and His vicar.¹ Such was the excitement and alarm in the city that it was not thought safe for her even to have an audience with the Signoria. It was probably on August 2, in the midst of the renewed panic, that she looked her last upon Florence, and went quietly home, " back to her daily way divine."

There still exists, among the Strozzi manuscripts of the Biblio-teca Nazionale of Florence, a fourteenth century copy of the letter which Catherine addressed on this occasion to the Gonfaloniere and Priors of the Republic. It is her farewell to Florence. " You have the desire," she says, " of reforming your city ; but I tell you that this desire will never be fulfilled, unless you strive to throw to the ground the hatred and rancour of your hearts and your love of yourselves, that is, unless you think not of yourselves alone, but of the universal welfare of all the city." She suggests certain obvious reforms in the choice of magistrates, urges them to see that the conditions of the peace are properly carried out, and delicately hints that the exiles should be recalled. Then she speaks about herself:—

"Let the sorrow that I feel at seeing your city (which I regard as mine) in such great trouble be my excuse. I did not expect to have to write to you ; but I thought, by word of mouth and face to face, to say these things to you, for the honour of God and your own utility. For my intention was to visit you, and to rejoice with you at the holy peace, for which peace I have laboured so long in all that I have been able, according to my possibility and my small power ; if I had been able to do more, I would have done it. After rejoicing with you, and thanking the Divine Goodness and you, I would have departed and gone away ¹ Cf. *Legenda*, III. vi. 35 (§429). 250